

The Cleveland
Museum of Art

Points of Contact:
Europe in the Americas,
1600–1700



Alicia Hudson Garr

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While this lesson, like most conceived within the Department of Education, was developed to connect to curricula taught in schools and touch upon state standards, *Points of Contact* was largely inspired by the 2007 exhibition and catalog *Jamestown, Quebec, Santa Fe: Three North American Beginnings* (James Kelly, Barbara Clark Smith, authors), co-organized by the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History and the Virginia Historical Society. Several objects within the Education art collection seemed to fit the theme of providing tangible evidence of the early colonizing efforts of France, England, and Spain in North America, but it was only with the help of talented Ingalls Library research staff, particularly Christine Edmondson, reference librarian, that those hunches became a reality. Additionally this creation, like most connected to the Education art collection, was realized with major effort from collections manager Karen Bourquin. Finally, this lesson would just be a dusty pamphlet on a shelf without the talented Art To Go staff and docents who bring the lesson to life through classroom presentations.

COVER: *Lidded Box, Made for Sale*, about 1880. Mi'kmaq (Micmac) people, Canada or Northern Michigan, Northeast Woodlands, North America. Birchbark foundation, dyed porcupine quill decoration; 7.6 x 11.4 cm (3 x 4-1/2 in.). The Cleveland Museum of Art, Educational Purchase Fund 1920.292.

Written by Alicia Hudson Garr

THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART
Department of Education and Public Programs
11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44106-1797
Art to Go Services
216-707-2160
TDD 216-421-0018
FAX 216-421-9277

edprograminfo@clevelandart.org
www.clevelandart.org

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Three major European powers made their presence felt in the New World in the 1600s—France, England, and Spain. While each country had its own unique reasons for colonization, each also had citizens who wished to escape religious turmoil at home, and the desire for economic gain motivated those willing to finance such travels. Although these countries no longer have political influence in the areas they settled, their cultural influences remain to this day. This lesson identifies the geographic regions settled by France, England, and Spain; the reasons settlers wanted to come to the New World; and the types of financial rewards their backers hoped to realize by sending colonists.

The Presentation

Nouvelle France

The French colonization of the New World was primarily driven by the desire for economic gain. When Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés brought back silver from Peru and gold from Mexico (1519–20), word got out quickly in Europe that there were material riches for the taking in the New World. Not wanting France to be left out of the game, in 1534 Francis I (reigned 1515–47) commissioned Jacques Cartier to “discover certain islands and lands where it is said that a great quantity of gold and other precious things are to be found.”¹ By July of that year Cartier had explored Newfoundland and traveled into the St. Lawrence River valley, planting a cross in the name of the king to claim the area. The Iroquois peoples in the area referred to their settlements as “Kanada”; Cartier and the French applied that name, and we know the region today as Canada.

Europeans visited the Canadian coastline annually in the 1500s, mostly to fish, but they also traded with Native North American peoples for furs, which eventually became the

1. Wikipedia, “[Jacques Cartier](#),” accessed 12/2009.

major export of the region. To exploit the commodities of Canada, the French king put his stamp of approval on a plan to colonize what was beginning to be called La Nouvelle France (New France). Attempts at colonization began as early as 1541, but no permanent settlement was established until 1608. This successful colonization effort was spearheaded by Samuel de Champlain, who had fully explored the St. Lawrence River valley several years before. “Negotiations” were conducted with the Montagnais, Algonquin, and Etchemin peoples² for permission to settle the area. None of these Indians actually lived there, but they were eager to have the French in areas previously occupied by their recently defeated enemies, the Iroquois. This precedent of French alliance with Indians who were enemies of the Iroquois had significant effects on events in the French colonies from later decades of the 1600s until the French and Indian war of the mid 1700s.

Maximilian de Bethune, duke of Sully and prime minister to Henry IV (reigned 1589–1610), and others in the French court opposed the colonization effort as its focus was not agricultural, which was seen at the time as the prime source of wealth in the French economy. Because of such opposition, developing the future colony was entrusted to private enterprise, and Henry IV granted wealthy merchants the exclusive right to conduct the fur trade.³ Furs were in high demand to line winter garments as protection against the cold, and procuring fur sources elsewhere was necessary since the beaver had been hunted almost to extinction in Europe.

Louis XIII (reigned 1610–43) did not give much support to the colony for the first few decades of the 1600s, but his advisor, Cardinal Richelieu, wanted to make Nouvelle France as significant as the English colonies along the Atlantic seaboard. In 1627 Richelieu founded the Company of New France to invest in the colony. To turn Quebec, the region’s largest city, into an important mercantile and farming community, he promised land parcels to hundreds of new settlers.⁴ Yet the population did not really increase until Louis XIV (reigned 1643–1715) made Nouvelle France a royal province in 1663 and efforts were made to protect the colony from attack by sending military enforcements. A population

2. James C. Kelly, *Jamestown, Quebec, Santa Fe: Three North American Beginnings*, exh. cat. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2007), 99.

3. *Ibid.*, 98.

4. Wikipedia, “[New France](#),” accessed 12/2009.

census of 1665–66 revealed about three thousand inhabitants, with men greatly outnumbering women. To strengthen the colony and make it the center of France's colonial empire, Louis XIV decided to give dowries to seven hundred single women if they moved to Nouvelle France. By the end of the century, Quebec had many more inhabitants than just *coureurs des bois* (fur traders, most without licenses): civil servants, entrepreneurs, clergy, artisans, and slaves made up its fairly diverse population.⁵

Cardinal Richelieu ensured that Nouvelle France would be inhabited only by Roman Catholics by forbidding non-Roman Catholics from living there. Thus Roman Catholicism, and missionaries such as the Jesuits, became firmly established in the area. While the Church had suffered losses in reputation as a result of the Reformation movements of the 1500s, in some ways it was strengthened through the conflict, evidenced in part by the rise of the Jesuit order. The Jesuits had three main goals: create schools; carry out missionary activity; and stop the rise of Protestantism.⁶ They carried out their charge with military-like organization and discipline; because of their training in Greek, Latin, classical literature, poetry, and philosophy, the Jesuits were regarded as champions of learning. Nouvelle France was ripe for missionary activity, and in the 1600s many Jesuits devoted themselves to converting the American Indians. Their efforts, particularly among the Huron, were often successful because the missionaries devoted themselves to learning native languages. They were also astute observers of customs and wrote some of the earliest accounts of life among Indians in Nouvelle France.

Today the bilingual signs and packaging found everywhere are obvious remnants of the French presence in Canada. French is the official language only in the province of Quebec, but most Canadians are at least familiar with the language due to this early heritage. First Nations groups have continued to live in reservations close to the French population. One of the largest Iroquois settlements, Kahnawake, is in Quebec. While relations between Europeans and First Nations peoples are still strained in Canada, the two groups coexist more peacefully there than elsewhere on the continent.

5. Kelly, *Jamestown, Quebec, Santa Fe*, 107.

6. Wikipedia, "[Society of Jesus](#)," accessed 12/2009.

The 16th century in Europe was marked by religious controversy in the form of the Reformation—a challenge to the status quo of the Roman Catholic Church—and the introduction of Protestantism. In countries that retained their faith, such as France and Spain, Catholicism emerged from this assault strengthened and renewed, even launching a counterattack against its critics, commonly called the Counter-Reformation. The Church used art to encourage piety among the faithful and to persuade those it regarded as heretics to return to the fold; it required subject matter that was doctrinally correct and visually appealing in order to influence the largest possible number of people.⁷ Both the Church and the Catholic nobility supported ambitious building and decoration projects to achieve these ends. This fragment may be a remnant of one of those many decoration projects.

The sculpture fragment is small, which suggests that although it is only part of a whole, the entire composition must not have been very large. If it was indeed part of an

7. Marilyn Stokstad, with David Cateforis, *Art History*, 2d ed. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2002), 758.

Fragment from an Altarpiece, Christ Child, c. 1600–1800, France. Carved wood, gilt: 22.2 x 12.7 x 7.6 cm (8-3/4 x 5 x 3 in.). The Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of James R. Johnson 1988.1045.



altarpiece, it was intended for an intimate setting, not meant to be seen from a distance in, say, a large cathedral. The figure looks like a baby, not like a small man as the Christ child might have been presented during the medieval period. The hands that hold him—those of the Virgin Mary?—are modeled with great sensitivity. While the surface is badly deteriorated, the generous use of stuccoed gold leaf was intended to give it a rich luster. Textiles may have adorned the figure. Based on other surviving religious sculpture of the period, the entire composition probably held much drama, perhaps with windswept drapery and faces displaying great emotion. This approach was characteristic of the period, later deemed the “Baroque” style of art.

Nouvelle France was not entirely the primitive wilderness that many accounts suggest, based on the material evidence of objects found in archaeological sites in Quebec, Trois-Rivieres, and Montreal. After all, in the 1600s many French colonists in the area were nobility or members of Catholic orders such as the Society of Jesus and the Franciscans of Recollets. Such well-educated and cultured people likely brought with them items for religious reflection and could have imported objects such as a gilded-wood altarpiece from France without too much difficulty since ships traveled between Quebec and Europe at least annually. An object like this one could have decorated the altar of a newly created parish church in Nouvelle France.

In 1534, when Jacques Cartier entered the areas now known as the Maritime provinces, his initial encounter with native peoples was thought to have been with the Micmac, an Algonquin-speaking people who today have significant populations in the eastern provinces of Canada and in the state of Maine in the United States. The French eventually became an ally with the Micmac, as they had with other Algonquin-speaking peoples of Nouvelle France, against a traditional enemy, the Iroquois. Several groups of Micmac converted to Catholicism as a result of the Roman Catholic presence in the colony.

The Micmac and fellow Wabnaki confederacy members, the Abenaki, Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, and Maliseet, have an affinity for working with the inner layers of the birch tree

and create useful and beautiful objects from its bark, from containers to watertight canoes. This container is identifiable as a product of the Micmac people by the artist's choice of the eight-pointed star motif on the lid. Its great age is suggested by its fragile condition and the faded dyes used on the porcupine quills. As early as 1606–7, French colonists described Micmac people wearing quilled ornaments, as dyed by the women, in “black, white and red colours, as lively as possibly may be.”⁸ Many First Nations groups, not just the Micmac, decorated objects by embroidering them with porcupine quills, a time-consuming and challenging method of decoration.

Porcupine quills are straight and do not lend themselves to curvilinear designs, so quillwork designs were traditionally geometric. It has been suggested that Micmac women created quilled objects as early as the 1600s to satisfy European demand for curiosities from the New World; indeed, many objects with quillwork from the 1600s have ended up in European museums (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; British Museum, London; Musée de l'Homme, Paris). However,

8. Ruth B. Phillips, “Woodland,” section 4 of “Quillwork,” chap. XI in *Native North American Art*, Oxford Art Online, c. 2007–10, accessed 12/2009.

Lidded Box, Made for Sale, about 1880. Mi'kmaq (Micmac) people, Canada or Northern Michigan, Northeast Woodlands, North America. Birchbark foundation, dyed porcupine quill decoration; 7.6 x 11.4 cm (3 x 4-1/2 in.). The Cleveland Museum of Art, Educational Purchase Fund 1920.292.



brightly colored Bohemian glass beads were generally a preferred medium once they became available to native peoples, who used the imported beads to decorate clothing and portable objects. Thus, the use of porcupine quills often suggests, but does not always mean, greater age.

Before the arrival of the French, the Iroquois lived in the St. Lawrence River valley, where all three major settlements (Quebec City, Montreal, and Trois-Riveres) in Nouvelle France were located. While they may have been pushed farther south by the presence of the French colonists who formed alliances with the Algonquin, the Iroquois continued to be a fearsome presence in the region, affecting lives of French settler and Indian alike. While Iroquois men embarked on war parties and hunted, the women's traditional pastime was creating beautifully ornamented functional objects, including items of clothing. Before Europeans settled in the New World, the traditional materials for moccasins, bags, and other practical items of clothing were animal hide and porcupine quills. The hides were often smoked to darken them and then decorated with motifs of cosmological significance. By the 1800s, First Nations peoples preferred glass beads, which they acquired through trade with whites, who had imported them to the New World. Glass beads were more colorful than dyed porcupine quills, and their small size allowed them to be organized in a wider choice of motifs than porcupine quills.

From an early date, travelers to Nouvelle France enthusiastically collected items of native manufacture. Included in the letters of Major Jasper Grant, an Irish-born officer stationed in the wilds of Canada from 1802 to 1809, are descriptions of the customs of the Indians written for the entertainment and wonder of family and acquaintances back in Europe. In describing the dress of the native peoples of the region, he says: "On the foot they wear a shoe made of deerskin which they tan in a peculiar manner with the brains of the animal. These shoes are called maccausons and when worn are ornamented with beads, moose deer hair, tin, etc."⁹ By the mid to late 1800s the creation of beaded items like moccasins had become a specialty of Iroquois women who sold them to tourists visiting Niagara Falls in particular. Moccasins and beaded "whimsies" were the major output of their production.

9. Ruth B. Phillips, *Patterns of Power: The Jasper Grant Collection and Great Lakes Indian Art of the Early Nineteenth Century* (Kleinburg, Ont.: McMichael Canadian Collection, 1984), 19.



Beaded Moccasins, about 1850–1910. Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) people, Northeast Woodlands, North America. Leather, beads, velveteen, ribbon, paper, homespun cotton; each 9.3 x 25.2 x 8.3 cm (3-5/8 x 9-7/8 x 3-1/4 in.). The Cleveland Museum of Art, Educational Purchase Fund 1927.256.

These moccasins were likely made as late as the second half of the 1800s; the opalescent beads, which were in fashion in the latter part of the century, helped determine that date. The Tuscarora, one of the six nations included in the Iroquois confederacy, tended to use gold, red, and blue beads in their wares, with monochromatic shading of the individual hues, seen in the beading on the vamp of these moccasins.¹⁰ In a reference to the old style of creating such items of dark smoked hide, the turned-down cuffs are of dark brown velveteen, as is the fabric under the beading on the vamp. Victorian-era women of European descent, in particular, would have appreciated the fine workmanship in the moccasins' construction and beading, as the arts of needlework were greatly admired and practiced by women of the age.

10. Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700–1900* (Seattle: University of Washington Press; Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 224.

New England

Curiosity about the New World came to England a little later than it did to its European counterparts. Not until Elizabeth I (reigned 1558–1603) restored a measure of peace to the country were her subjects interested in finding other outlets, such as colonization, for their energies.¹¹ Sir Walter Raleigh sailed for the New World in 1584 and tried to set up a colony on the shores of today's North Carolina coast, in an area he deemed "Virginia" in honor of his virgin queen. These early colonizing attempts, which failed, occurred during the outbreak of the Anglo-Spanish war (reigned 1588–1604); once peace was restored a group of highly placed merchants and public men pressed Elizabeth's royal successor, James I (reigned 1603–25), for charter rights to colonize Virginia.¹² James granted the colonization request, and the charter authorized the investors to create two companies: one, based in Plymouth (England), was to settle the northern part of the area defined between Maine and North Carolina; the other, based in London, was to settle the southern area. As the charter was granted by power of the king, a royal commission was set up to govern each colony by council. In 1606 the Virginia Company of London set itself up as a commercial enterprise, with stockholders investing jointly to pool resources and spread out the risk in case the venture failed, and prepared for its expedition.

Three Virginia Company ships arrived in the New World in 1607, and the settlers named their colony Jamestown for the king who granted the royal charter for colonization. A commercial enterprise, the colony was designed to bring wealth to those who remained in England and had no desire to settle elsewhere. These investors believed a successful colony would create a new market for English goods that would, in turn, bring prosperity back to the motherland. Yet the new colony hardly thrived in its early years. The choice for settlement was strategically advantageous, being in a well-sheltered harbor deep enough for large ships, but less well placed for its residents' health as the surrounding waters of the James River were a breeding ground for malaria-carrying mosquitoes. The colonists had planned to trade with native peoples for what they needed to survive, but unfortunately the worst draught in seven centuries gripped Virginia in 1607, and the Indians refused to barter

11. Kelly, *Jamestown, Quebec, Santa Fe*, 60.

12. *Ibid.*, 61.

away their diminished foodstuffs.¹³ Increasingly dependent on shipments arriving from England to supply them with food, the colony of Jamestown almost perished when its supply ship did not arrive before the winter of 1609–10. Only sixty of the original five hundred colonists were alive at the end of this “Starving Time.”

By 1612 the colony’s fortunes had changed. John Rolfe introduced a new strain of tobacco from the Caribbean to Virginia that grew well and yielded a better-tasting product than the *tobacco rustica* indigenous to North America. In 1614, Rolfe sent to England a shipload of this tobacco, which fetched a good price. With the colony’s original successful export, everyone turned to growing tobacco, and by 1640 Virginians exported a million pounds annually.¹⁴ Yet doing so came at the expense of the Native North Americans living nearby because growing tobacco meant encroaching on native land. Relations with the Algonquin-speaking Indians of the area such as Powhatan, the chief whose daughter Pocahontas married Rolfe, had been tense from the start. Conflicts intensified when peaceful Indians were killed by settlers who had trouble distinguishing friend from foe. Powhatan and other leaders realized that settlers would have a permanent negative effect on their lives, and in 1622 he sought to extinguish the Jamestown colony completely. The battle entrenched both sides and settlers never trusted native peoples again, leading to many more conflicts. Eventually the Indians were pushed westward as more settlers arrived and the demand for land increased. Over the next one hundred years the English settlement of Virginia developed into a place of landed gentry. The tobacco farmers needed labor to harvest and produce their crop, which led to the importation of indentured servants and then slaves who could provide the great amounts of labor needed to cultivate this cash crop. The contrast in lifestyle between the gentleman planter in Virginia and the Puritan farmer in Massachusetts factored into the bloody conflict that divided the United States in the late 1800s, pitting the industrialized Northerner (Yankee) against the gentleman farmer of the South, whose way of life depended on the institution of slavery. In terms of religious influence, the lasting effect of the Protestant Church of England was such that no one of the Roman Catholic faith was elected to the presidency until 1960 (John F. Kennedy).

13. *Ibid.*, 62.

14. *Ibid.*, 80.

One obvious lasting cultural effect of English settlement is the use of English as the official language of the United States of America.

In 1622 the Virginia Company published a broadside listing items colonists should take to Virginia. Listed among them was “One Armour compleat, light,” with a note in the margin adding, “For one man, but if halfe of your men have armour it is sufficient so that all have Peeeces and swords.”¹⁵ “One Armour compleat, light” probably refers to light armor consisting of a breastplate, backplate, and helmet. By the early 1600s armor had changed in response to the introduction of firearms; plates of armor had to be thick enough to withstand projectiles like bullets and thus were so heavy that cavalry no longer wore plate armor from head to toe. Helmets like the cabasset were commonly worn by cavalry and pikemen whose job was to protect musketeers on the ground. Pear-shaped, the cabasset was open-faced and reinforced at the crown to protect the wearer against sword slashes from charging cavalry. Such helmets were often mass produced, yet this one shows great detailing from the darkened engraving and traces of gilt. A very similar cabasset was among the first pieces of armor found on Jamestown Island.¹⁶ As the colonists and the Virginia Company had

15. *Ibid.*, 24.

16. Historic Jamestown: Jamestown Rediscovery, accessed 12/2009.

Helmet (Cabasset), about 1575–1600. Italy, Milan. Steel with engraving; 24.1 x 27.1 cm (9-1/2 x 10-5/8 in.). The Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John L. Severance 1916.1525.



reference only to the types of warfare fought on the continent, it probably seemed wise to bring along this type of armor. However, since they were not fighting any cavalry in the New World, how useful such an article really would have been is doubtful.

The Virginia Company also saw fit to supply the English colony at Jamestown with a physician, Dr. John Pott, a “well practiced in Chirurgerie and Phisique, and expert also in Distilling of waters”¹⁷ who sailed for Jamestown in 1621. Although the Virginia Company was essentially flat broke at that time, the officers recognized the need to furnish their medical man on call in Virginia appropriately. He was provided with a house, a chest of medicines, and valuable “Books of Phisique which would always belonge unto the Company.”¹⁸ While Dr. Pott was said to be well practiced in surgery, he must not have overemphasized his skills in this area, as the company indicated that if some surgeons could be found, their sea passage to the colony would also be paid.¹⁹ In the 1600s there was a difference between physicians and surgeons: physicians needed a university degree, while surgeons needed only a command of anatomy and to be handy with a saw. A tool similar to this one is documented in the contents of a surgeon’s chest sent to Jamestown in 1609.

Medicine in the 1600s had a lot to do with purging “humours,” which when unbalanced were considered the source of most illnesses. Ill-humours were often eliminated by bleeding the patient. A spiritual origin for illness probably held equal weight, though, since sin was thought to be another root of illness and its correction required repentance and much spiritual consultation. Some of the cuts, sores, infections, and crushed bones that were often the result of warfare could be healed through herbal poultices, but amputation of limbs through surgery was often considered the most effective means to save a patient. The success rate might have been 30–50%, if a surgeon was skillful. Removing the limb and sewing up the affected area had to be accomplished in two or three minutes since the loss of blood usually prevented a patient’s recovery from surgery.²⁰

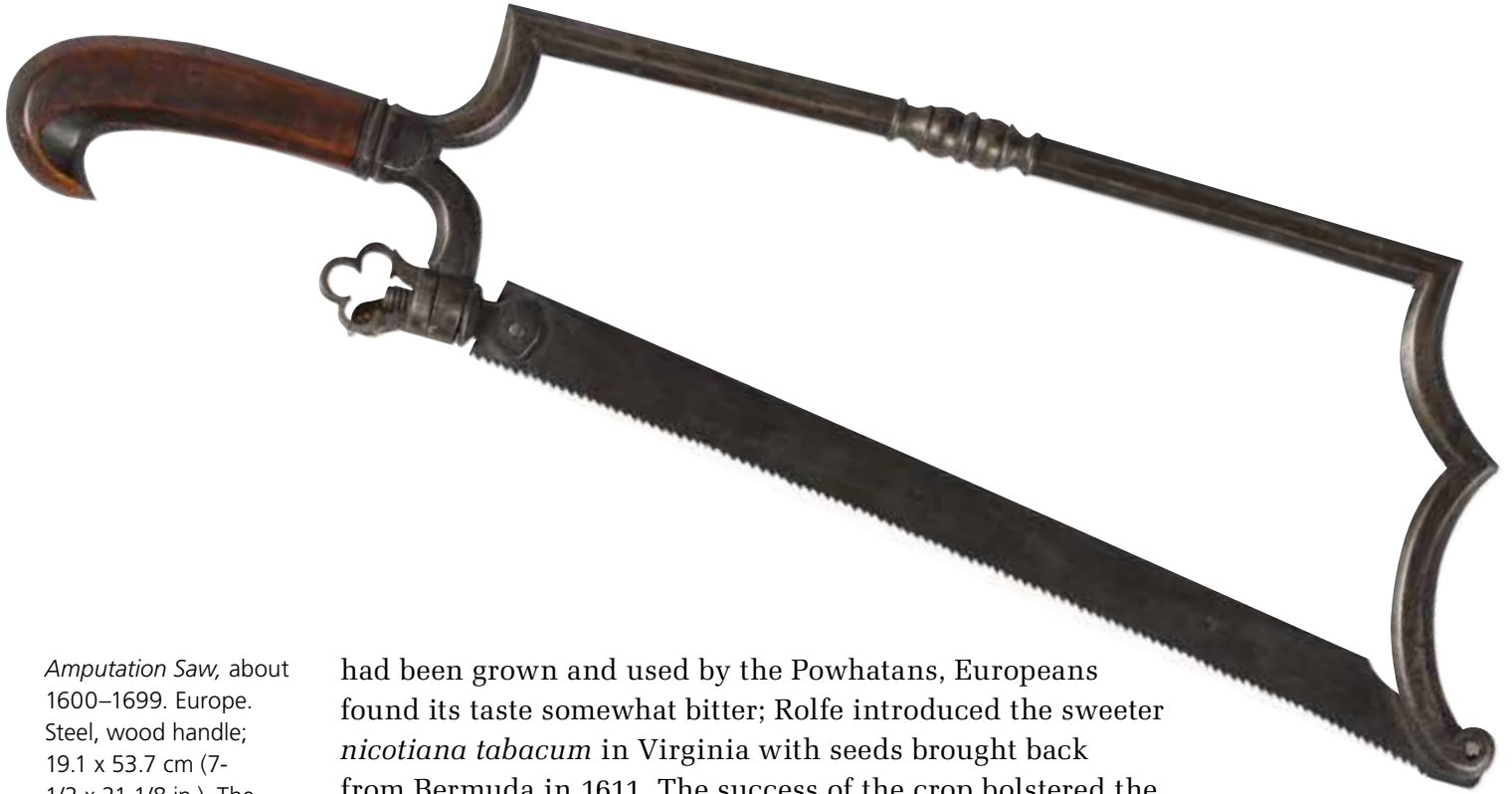
John Rolfe, best known perhaps as husband of Pocahontas, is credited with cultivating the first successful export from the English colony of Jamestown: tobacco. While *tobacco rustica*

17. *1607: Jamestown and the New World*, compiled by Dennis Montgomery (Williamsburg, Va.: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation; Lanham, Md.: Rowan & Littlefield, 2007), 188.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.*, 189.

20. *Museum Guide* (Lessens, France: Hospital Our Lady with the Rose, 2008), 52–53.



Amputation Saw, about 1600–1699. Europe. Steel, wood handle; 19.1 x 53.7 cm (7-1/2 x 21-1/8 in.). The Cleveland Museum of Art, Anonymous gift in memory of Dr. Dudley P. Allen 1920.270.

had been grown and used by the Powhatans, Europeans found its taste somewhat bitter; Rolfe introduced the sweeter *nicotiana tabacum* in Virginia with seeds brought back from Bermuda in 1611. The success of the crop bolstered the foundering colony and the colonists soon recognized it as a commercially viable product. Tobacco leaves were used as currency in Virginia Company stores, and colonists could pay their taxes with tobacco. It is no wonder, then, that legislation had to be enacted to bar the cultivation of tobacco in the streets and all over town so that colonists would not neglect food crops in order to raise tobacco.²¹

The success of the English colony's tobacco product helped loosen Spain's stranglehold on the market, which it had maintained throughout the 1500s. Indeed the taste for the weed in Europe was a result of Spanish imports from the New World. Spain maintained colonies in warmer climes than Virginia, where it was easier to grow tobacco. Its success in Virginia must have surprised everyone. Records indicate that 60,000 pounds were on the market in 1622 and six years later 500,000 pounds; by 1637–40 tobacco exports from Jamestown averaged over one million pounds annually.²² There were those who found the habit distasteful. King James I, for whom the Jamestown colony was founded, presciently referred to tobacco smoking as "A custome Lothsome to the eye, hatefull to the braine, dangerous to the Lungs, and in the black, stinking fume thereof, nearest resembling the horrible Stigian smoke of the pit that is bottomlesse."²³

21. *Ibid.*, 124.

22. *Ibid.*, 126.

23. *Ibid.*, 125.



Pipe Bowl, about 1600–1799. Mi'kmaq (Micmac) people, Northeast Woodlands, North America. Ceramic; 2.5 x 6.2 cm (1 x 2-3/8 in.). The Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of Nathan D. Chapman, 1917.⁸⁷²

While tobacco smoking was and is recreational among those of European descent, it was and is a religious practice among Native North Americans. In the act of smoking, native peoples believe one's prayers are carried aloft; tobacco is considered one of the sacred plant gifts of the creator, along with sweetgrass, cedar, and sage. The tobacco is burned in a small bowl made of stone or fired clay that can be detached from a pipe with a long wooden stem. Pipe bowls used ceremonially by Indians today differ little in construction from those used hundreds of years ago, which were illustrated by Father Louis Hennepin in his 1698 book, *A New Discovery in a Vast Country in America*.²⁴ This pipe bowl may be as old as the one shown in Hennepin's book.

New Spain

The accidental sighting by the Spanish of some islands in the Caribbean, which we celebrate as Columbus Day, is often marked as the European discovery of the New World. Yet evidence in coastal Canada suggests Vikings were present centuries earlier. Columbus quickly and easily subjugated the Caribbean Taino Indians, who had little of value to offer the Spanish crown except a few gold trinkets. What was found, however, was enough to excite interest in subsidizing further exploration.

King Ferdinand and Queen Isabel (reigned jointly 1479–1516) planned to compete with Portugal for control of trade routes to Asia. Portugal controlled the route around the Horn of Africa, and Columbus proposed to secure a route to Asia by sailing west. Jesuits supposedly accompanied him in his appeal to the Spanish regents, who were celebrating the recent expulsion of the Moors (Muslims) from the south of Spain. The royal couple may have felt that, with these Christian triumphs, the world was ready to accept the “true” faith and that a Spanish missionary presence was necessary for future Spanish expeditions. A desire to impose Spanish dominance in both commerce and religion was the real factor in what would become the Spanish colonization efforts in the New World.

The exotic goods Columbus brought back from his initial voyage encouraged the king and queen to finance second,

24. Kelly, *Jamestown, Quebec, Santa Fe*, 6.

third, and fourth voyages, and to supply Columbus with fifteen hundred men, cannons, crossbows, guns, and cavalry.²⁵ One of the islands was soon named Hispaniola and work was begun to settle Spanish colonists and subjugate the native peoples, conscripting them into the labor needed to build a town. The island of Cuba was also settled; the explorer Hernán Cortés used it as a launching point for an expedition to the mainland of Central America, now Mexico, in 1519. His exploits conquering the Aztecs and other native peoples in the region are legendary, and forever changed the course of life in the region as they marked the beginning of Spanish hegemony for almost three hundred years.²⁶ It took Cortés two years to conquer the Aztecs, and in the process their capital city, Tenochtitlan, was largely destroyed by

25. "[Spanish Colonization of the Americas](#)," Wikipedia, accessed 12/2009.

Detail of a Frontispiece from A New Discovery of a Vast Country in America (London, 1698) by Louis Hennepin, a Franciscan friar. Taken from James C. Kelly and Barbara Clark Smith, Jamestown, Quebec, Santa Fe: Three North American Beginnings (Washington and New York: Smithsonian Books, 2007), 6.



cannon fire. Mexico City was built on the foundations of Tenochtitlan. By 1535, Charles V (reigned 1516–56) and the rest of Spain referred to the region as New Spain.

Not long after, the Spanish made their presence known in North America. As before, a desire for material wealth, heightened by the discovery of gold and silver in the former Aztec empire, and for religious proselytization, drove the Spaniards farther north. As early as 1540 the conquistador Francisco Vázquez de Coronado, searching for mythic cities of gold, forcibly lodged himself among Indians who lived a settled agricultural life in semi-permanent dwellings he called pueblos (towns).²⁷ The towns were in sharp contrast to the lands inhabited by the hunters and gatherers the Spaniards had passed through to get there. Coronado never found his lost city of gold and withdrew from the area by 1542. His failure did not stop explorer Juan de Oñate from looking for a place of wealthy native peoples, precious minerals, and a waterway through North America in 1598. He brought five hundred settlers as well as soldiers and priests to what would later be called New Mexico. New Mexico disappointed Oñate as it had Coronado, and he lost a half million pesos of his family's fortune on the enterprise.

Oñate also failed to establish an independent Spanish town in the region, relying instead on settling his colonists in pueblos.²⁸ This was in fact a breach of Spanish law. The crown knew that remote New Mexico would be a nightmare to maintain and a drain on the royal coffers but concluded that Spain could not afford to abandon its efforts. Franciscan missionaries who had accompanied Oñate convinced Luis de Velasco, viceroy of New Spain, that they had baptized some seven thousand Pueblo peoples, and Velasco told the king, "We could not abandon the land without great offense to God and great risk of losing what had been gained."²⁹

By 1609 some of the colonists had settled at the foot of the Sangre de Christo Mountains and formed a town they called Santa Fe (Holy Faith). Soon after the characteristic features of a Spanish town were present: streets laid out on an orderly grid pattern, a *plaza mayor* (town square) that was half as long as it was wide, and government buildings such as a house for the governor. The work of building, irrigating the

26. Ibid.

27. Kelly, *Jamestown, Quebec, Santa Fe*, 136.

28. Ibid., 138.

29. Ibid., 141.

land, and planting crops was undertaken through conscripted labor from the Pueblo peoples, justified through a feudal tradition called *encomienda*. Spaniards could petition the crown to become an *encomendero* (trustee of native peoples), and provide for their military protection and spiritual welfare in exchange for a collection of tribute or taxes. The system did not allow encomenderos to require labor from their wards without paying them; however, abuses of the law were common. Such abuses were among the cause of the brief expulsion of the Spanish from the area during the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, and the *encomienda* system seems to have been abandoned after a Spanish negotiated peace thirteen years later.

It was said that the cause of converting Native North Americans to Christianity was the crown's motivation for supporting the Spanish colony in Santa Fe, and it was the Jesuits who were charged with most of this work. Missions were established near Pueblo populations and became self-sustaining enterprises that housed and fed their converts. Native peoples and Franciscans worked together to house and clothe everyone; Franciscans undertook to provide the Indians with religious instruction, taught practical skills such as ironwork and leather tanning to men, and instructed women in weaving, sewing, and laundry. Conversions were not necessarily voluntary, as the people did not understand the contract they were entering into when they expressed interest in learning about the Roman Catholic faith. At some pueblos conversions were so thorough that the native peoples forgot their traditional religious practices.

While Spanish influence in North America declined by the early 1800s, a residual presence is still strongly felt in New Mexico today. According to the Census of 2000, more than one-third of New Mexicans claim Hispanic origin, and almost 30% of the population speaks Spanish at home.³⁰ The town of Santa Fe continues to attract a healthy dose of tourists who want to experience the mingling presences of Spanish, Indian, and European cultures that have persisted there to this day.

Many historians have attributed the Spanish conquest of the native peoples of Mexico during Cortés's campaign to

30. "New Mexico," Wikipedia, accessed 12/2009.

superior European weaponry. How could blades of obsidian and shields of leather hold out against steel-tipped arrows and flying bullets? This sophisticated piece of technology, a firing mechanism from a rifle called a flintlock, dates a little later than the 1609 foundation of Santa Fe, but it is a fine example of the detailing often lavished on European firearms of the time.

While a flintlock rifle was most often used for hunting, projectiles fired through an explosion of gunpowder had been a feature of European weaponry for several hundred years. The elements necessary for firepower in Europe came together successfully in the 1500s, with gunpowder imported from China and steel that had been in use in armor throughout the Middle Ages. Armor proved less useful once muskets were common on the battlefield, as it had to be too thick and cumbersome to protect its wearer from bullets. The term “bullet-proof” comes from the test of a piece of armor’s strength against a fired projectile, with the dent in the armor and lack of piercing acting as proof of its resistance to the bullet.

For an explosion to take place in the chamber of a rifle, a spark has to be introduced into chamber. The flintlock mechanism creates a spark through striking the flint, which is held in between the adjustable jaws on top; as the hammer meets the pan below, the spark falls into the chamber and ignites the gunpowder, creating an explosion that sends the bullet flying

Flint Lock, about 1750.
Madrid, Spain. Steel,
gilding, engraving; 8.3
x 14.7 cm (3-1/4 x 5-3/4
in.). The Cleveland
Museum of Art, Gift of
Mr. and Mrs. John L.
Severance 1918.74.



out of the chamber down the shaft of the rifle. This flintlock mechanism has been engraved with motifs of the spoils of war (shields, drums, swords) and the words “Gabriel de Algora en mad.” This identifies the weapon’s maker, Gabriel de Algora, who was appointed gun maker to King Ferdinand in 1749.³¹ The foliate scrolls on the griffin-shaped hammer and the extravagant detail show an appreciation for the French Rococo style popular at the time.

A rifle with a flintlock mechanism continued to be the European settlers’ weapon of choice in North America for well over one hundred years and was in common use until the American Civil War of the 1860s.

Franciscan missionaries claimed they had converted some seven thousand Pueblo people by the mid 1500s, and that number doubled by 1617. Conversion was, of course, in the eyes of the beholder. To the Spanish, conversion to Catholicism involved acculturation and what the Spanish probably regarded as a civilizing and subjugating influence. To the Pueblo people, conversion changed their lives: they were required to live in dormlike residences within the confines of the mission; assumed tasks (unpaid) that contributed to its function; and were forced to abandon their own religious rites and culture.

The missions were located primarily in the pueblos themselves, as the Pueblo people were the focus of missionary work. While finished goods did travel up the *Camino Real* (Royal Road) from Mexico City to New Spain once a year, such merchandise was in short supply and had to be supplemented with items made by the native peoples. The Franciscans taught crafts such as carpentry, weaving, and ironwork, in addition to attending to religious education. The Pueblo people came to be such successful craftspeople that they themselves built the churches that accompanied the missions. Decoration for the churches was to be supplied for the most part by local artisans, taught by Franciscans. The missions flourished, thriving especially under the protection of crown-designated military personnel.

Spanish religious art was part of the overall extravagance that marked the Catholic religious experience of the 1500s

31. Helmut Nickel and Stuart W. Pyhrr, “Arms and Armor,” in *Recent Acquisitions* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987), 25.

and 1600s. Perhaps in reaction to attacks from Protestantism, the Roman Catholic Church strove to create a setting that touched the faithful in a direct, powerful, and sometimes dramatic way. This effort was reflected in architecture with swelling curvilinear forms, in painting with dramatic light and coloristic effects, and in figural sculpture reflecting true emotion—all designed to work in concert to create the religious experience the Church sought to express.

This male figure with outstretched arms is of a type used in a religious setting, either in a church or in a private home. Images of saints (called *santos*) were emissaries used to deliver believers' prayers as well as focal points of devotion. Santos that appear in sculptural form are called *bultos*. This *bultos* is of a type that would have been used in Pueblo churches in the 1600s. Its finely painted features and somewhat naturalistic proportions suggest it was carved in Europe and imported to the New World, or carved by

St. Joseph (Bultos),
about 1800–1899.
Colombia, South
America. Carved wood,
pigment; 26.4 x 11.4
(10-3/8 x 4-1/2 in.). The
Cleveland Museum of
Art, Gift of Miss Ruth E.
Adomeit 1985.1059.



an artist who was very aware of European artistic styles. However, many bultos used for devotional purposes in New Mexico were carved by Indian artists. Such figures often resemble folk art, with exaggerated proportions or innovative interpretations of Christian subject matter.

This figure represents St. Joseph, husband of Mary. Depictions of St. Joseph had experienced a renewed focus in Spanish art and religion of the 1500s and 1600s. No longer depicted as a bearded old man who occupies a shadowy background in images of the Holy Family, the St. Joseph in Spanish New World art is youthful, handsome, and compassionate. He greatly resembles images of Jesus Christ, but the attire—green tunic with orange or red cloak—indicates the attribution to St. Joseph. He was named patron saint of the conquest of the New World in 1555; by 1679, Charles II (reigned 1665–1700) made him patron saint of New Spain.³²

The Hopi were among the Pueblo people the Spanish encountered in New Mexico in the 1500s. The Spanish began to establish missions at the Hopi pueblos of Awatobi, Oraibi, and Shongopovi in 1629, but these missions were destroyed in the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. Fearing reprisal from the Spanish and wanting to avoid further attacks from the Navajo, the Hopi relocated far from the Rio Grande to more defensible locations high atop mesas in northeast Arizona, where most Hopi currently reside.

Evidence suggests the Hopi have been in the Four Corners region (the area where New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, and Colorado meet) since the 500s AD. Some of the oldest material culture in the region is basketry. Baskets had many utilitarian functions, such as cooking (hot rocks added to water and foodstuffs) and water storage (tar or pitch added to the basket made it water-tight). While clay was present in the riverbeds of the Rio Grande in New Mexico, native peoples were not aware of its potential uses until about 1000. This knowledge may have come from contact with Indians from northern Mexico, perhaps the people who came to be known as the Anasazi, sometimes translated as “enemy ancestor people.” The Hopi, like other Pueblo peoples, have a rich history of working with clay and making pots. The

32. Charlene Villaseñor Black, *Creating the Cult of St. Joseph: Art and Gender in the Spanish Empire* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006), 34.

jar (1928.307) may actually date to the time of the Spanish influence in New Mexico (the 1600s), making it quite old. Its yellow ground color and swirling motifs suggest such pottery made between 1325 and 1625–1700. In later ceramics, the whirling pointed triangle design on the shoulder has been interpreted as representing a hummingbird sticking its beak inside a flower. The small vase (1948.734) has a more pronounced orange color and was made in the 20th century. However, many motifs that appear on modern Hopi vases were “recycled” from older pots. This vase’s imagery evokes a swirling, powerful wind.

The interaction between peoples of French, English, and Spanish descent and Native North Americans continues today. Museums in Quebec in Canada and Virginia and New Mexico in the United States celebrate the cultural heritage and the continuation of these three European cultures. In Quebec City, the Musées des Ursulines du Quebec and the Maison des Jesuits pay tribute to the early religious orders that had great impact on the culture of this French city. The Jamestown Settlement Museum maintains the grounds of the earliest permanent English settlement in North America,

Jar, about 1600–1699.
Hopi people(?), Pueblo,
Southwest, North
America. Ceramic; h.
10.8 cm (4-1/4 in.). The
Cleveland Museum
of Art, Educational
Purchase Fund 1928.307.



and other museums in Colonial Williamsburg preserve the material culture of those colonists. In New Mexico, the Governors Palace, among the first permanent structures in Santa Fe, is maintained as a museum, while the Museum of Spanish Colonial Art preserves the material culture of its early Spanish inhabitants. The culture of Native North Americans is celebrated in places such as the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, in Washington, D.C., and some contributions are studied as a part of American social studies curriculum at the elementary grade level. Have fun looking for evidence of either colonial or Indian presences as you travel—you will probably find it in the names of streets, cities, or rivers. While the 1600s may seem a long time ago, the marks those people left are still here today.

Small Vase, about 1920s. Hopi people, Pueblo, Southwest, North America. Ceramic; h. 10.2 cm (4 in.). The Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. Ruth Field Ruggles 1948.734.



List of Objects

Fragment from an Altarpiece, Christ Child, c. 1600–1800, France. Carved wood, gilt; 22.2 x 12.7 x 7.6 cm (8-3/4 x 5 x 3 in.). The Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of James R. Johnson 1988.1045.

Lidded Box, Made for Sale, about 1880. Mi'kmaq (Micmac) people, Canada or Northern Michigan, Northeast Woodlands, North America. Birchbark foundation, dyed porcupine quill decoration; 7.6 x 11.4 cm (3 x 4-1/2 in.). The Cleveland Museum of Art, Educational Purchase Fund 1920.292.

Beaded Moccasins, about 1850–1910. Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) people, Northeast Woodlands, North America. Leather, beads, velveteen, ribbon, paper, homespun cotton; each 9.3 x 25.2 x 8.3 cm (3-5/8 x 9-7/8 x 3-1/4 in.). The Cleveland Museum of Art, Educational Purchase Fund 1927.256.

Helmet (Cabasset), about 1575–1600. Italy, Milan. Steel with engraving; 24.1 x 27.1 cm (9-1/2 x 10-5/8 in.). The Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John L. Severance 1916.1525.

Amputation Saw, about 1600–1699. Europe. Steel, wood handle; 19.1 x 53.7 cm (7-1/2 x 21-1/8 in.). The Cleveland Museum of Art, Anonymous gift in memory of Dr. Dudley P. Allen 1920.270.

Pipe Bowl, about 1600–1799. Mi'kmaq (Micmac) people, Northeast Woodlands, North America. Ceramic; 2.5 x 6.2 cm (1 x 2-3/8 in.). The Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of Nathan D. Chapman 1917.872.

Detail of a Frontispiece from A New Discovery of a Vast Country in America (London, 1698) by Louis Hennepin, a Franciscan friar. Taken from James C. Kelly and Barbara Clark Smith, *Jamestown, Quebec, Santa Fe: Three North American Beginnings* (Washington and New York: Smithsonian Books, 2007), 6.

Flint Lock, about 1750. Madrid, Spain. Steel, gilding, engraving; 8.3 x 14.7 cm (3-1/4 x 5-3/4 in.). The Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John L. Severance 1918.74.

St. Joseph (Bultos), about 1800–1899. Colombia, South America. Carved wood, pigment; 26.4 x 11.4 (10-3/8 x 4-1/2 in.). The Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of Miss Ruth E. Adomeit 1985.1059.

Jar, about 1600–1699. Hopi people(?), Pueblo, Southwest, North America. Ceramic; h. 10.8 cm (4-1/4 in.). The Cleveland Museum of Art, Educational Purchase Fund 1928.307.

Small Vase, about 1920s. Hopi people, Pueblo, Southwest, North America. Ceramic; h. 10.2 cm (4 in.). The Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. Ruth Field Ruggles 1948.734.